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TURLINGTON TUMBLES

Into Eternity—John Oscar Turlington, The Murderer of Thomas C. Cranmer

Pays The Legal Penalty of His Crime and Dies on The Gallows

He Dies Game—A Model Execution Without An Accident or Blunder.

The Drop Sprung at 10:15 o'clock This Morning

History of Turlington And His Crime.



JOHN OSCAR TURLINGTON.

Boonville, Mo., March 6.—(Special.)—John Oscar Turlington paid the penalty of murder and was hanged in the jail yard at Boonville this morning at 10 o'clock, for the murder of Sheriff Thomas C. Cranmer, June 14, 1890.

Turlington spent

YESTERDAY

in no unusual way. He occupied the same cell from which he made his last escape. It is situated in the northeast corner. He was allowed the privilege of the inside passage way of the iron cage. He arose at six o'clock yesterday morning, ate a hearty, substantial breakfast, and spent the remaining hours until ten o'clock smoking, writing, reading and occasionally walking to the south end of the cage where he could plainly see the carpenters at work on his scaffold. He chatted pleasantly with his guards and expressed himself as ready for the trying ordeal on the morrow. He declared more than once that he did not want a stay of execution and that if it were in his power, he would not accept it under any circumstances.

At 10:15 o'clock, a. m., he went into his cell and laid down. Soon he was apparently

SOUND ASLEEP

and was not aroused for dinner. He slept until three o'clock in the afternoon and then arose from his humble cot. Pretty soon Sheriff Hornbeck entered the jail and with no one present besides the guard and the doomed man, he unfolded the fateful paper read the judgement, mandate and death warrant. Turlington listened attentively, but in an unconcerned manner, never, for a moment interrupting the official as page after page of the weary document was completed.

At 6:30 o'clock the prisoner ate a hearty supper, which he seemed to relish very much, and then he again retired for the night, his guards meanwhile sitting or pacing up and down the gloomy corridor in front of the dimly lighted cell of death.

About 8:30 o'clock quite a number of newspaper men and a few special guests, were invited into the circuit court room by Sheriff Hornbeck, where with closed doors, a meeting was held to take preliminary action as to the morrow's programme, so far as the press people and other specially invited persons were concerned. Walter Monroe, editor of the Tipton Times, was elected chairman. After some discussion, the sheriff decided that the hour for the execution should be set for 10 o'clock sharp, the following morning. It was also determined that only one ticket to each paper should be issued and that no reporter or other person should be admitted inside the jail until the hour for the execution should arrive. Sheriff Hornbeck also stated positively that, while he did not expect that any one would be guilty of such an act, that any man whom he suspected of being under the influence

of liquor, would not be admitted within the jail yard.

Before the meeting closed the following list of jurors to serve on this sad occasion, was read: J. J. Devine, Dr. J. C. Culp, John T. Tilman, Curg Reed, E. R. Potter, Dr. R. E. Howlett, all from the late Sheriff Thomas C. Cranmer's own township—Otterville; and W. B. Windsor, W. T. McKinley, Dryden Starke, Jr., Frank Reavis, Joseph Combs and Col. T. V. Hickox; special guests, Dr. P. L. Hurt, coroner, Dr. Teal, Col. B. B. McCulloch, Sheriff Ellis R. Smith, of Sedalia; Rev. L. P. Norfleet, pastor of the M. E. Church, South, officiating minister; Dr. Dreese, of Sedalia; Dr. Cooper, jail physician; Dr. Boardman, Dr. R. S. Holman, by special request of the prisoner, and undertaker W. L. Spahr.

THIS MORNING,

as the first faint beams of the sun streaked with streamers of red the horizon, there lay, deep and heavy upon the housetops and over the streets of the city, a mantle of March snow, immaculate in its glory and beautiful in its eyes of the children of men. It had sifted down as softly upon the earth as the divine syllables of some sweet singer's song in the land which people call paradise. Did these filmy flakes of perfect purity suspect when they fluttered out of the crystalline depths of the snowy heavens, that on the morrow, in the city that men and women call the "Vine Clad," a tragedy, fearful and irrevocable, would be enacted? Perhaps, could they have had hearts to feel and tongues to give utterance, these ephemeral strangers robed in the perishing raiment of white, would have said, "Would that that the gods of the air had not given us birth and sent us where the shadow of death prevailed and lifted not through all the gloomy day!"

Turlington had spent his last night

AS A HUMAN BEING

upon the earth. From 6 o'clock Thursday evening until 2 o'clock this morning, no person was within the jail walls proper but Turlington and the single death watch, B. B. Goodman. Sheriff Hornbeck, as has been stated, had given strict orders that nobody, under any circumstances, should be allowed inside the jail in closure.

The night watchman, B. B. Goodman, however, gives the following account of how Turlington spent

HIS LAST NIGHT.

"As I came on watch at 1 o'clock this morning I found the prisoner writing a letter and in low spirit, but he soon revived and talked freely and said he had been feeling badly all day, but said he was now ready to meet his fate and that he intended to die brave."

One hour later Turlington said, "Well, Mr. Goodman, I never felt better in my life. I don't feel like I had to die to-morrow, but it is a fact. Can you tell me why it is I did not think I would feel that way? But God is bracing me up all the time and I hope He will be with me to-morrow and I think He will, don't you?" Later he said, "Well, I will read my Bible and then I will try to pray and then I will try to sleep." Turlington then turned his lamp down and laid down and said to call him at two o'clock. He said that he wanted to get up and eat his breakfast and then he would be ready to begin to prepare himself to meet his fate. He then fell into a sound sleep at about 1:30 o'clock.

THE EXECUTION.

A few seconds before ten o'clock, Turlington was brought out of his cell. Accompanied by Sheriff Hornbeck of Cooper, Sheriff Smith of Pettis, Sheriff Green of Montgomery, and Rev. L. P. Norfleet, Turlington ascended his scaffold at precisely ten o'clock. Twelve guards, twelve jurors, a few invited guests and the representatives of the press surrounded the gallows, in the little private enclosure, surrounded by a high wall, in the jail yard. Turlington ascended the scaffold with firm tread and little support. He stepped to the railing and said: "I have nothing to say, God bless and be with you all."

Sheriff Hornbeck and deputy sheriff Rymel pinioned his hands behind him and drew the black cap over his head. Rev. L. P. Norfleet offered up a brief prayer for the soul of the condemned man. Intense silence prevailed. Not a sound, nor a breath was to be heard. Sheriff Hornbeck was cool, calm and deliberate, though his face showed intense anguish. Turlington was calm and brave and betrayed but slight emotion. He was dressed in a black Prince Albert coat,

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—U. S. Gov't Report, Aug. 17, 1889.

Royal Baking Powder

ABSOLUTELY PURE

black pants and vest and a white shirt and necktie.

The drop fell at precisely 15 minutes after 10 o'clock. Death was almost instantaneous and there was hardly a visible tremor in the face or body.

Just before dying, Turlington, in a low voice, repeated a short prayer, after Rev. Mr. Norfleet.

Turlington died game. His nerve never deserted him for an instant. He did not cry or exhibit any evidence of weakness. He surprised all by his steady nerve.

Sheriff Hornbeck did his duty bravely and efficiently.

The whole affair passed off without a break or an accident of any kind. It was well conducted from beginning to end.

JOHN OSCAR TURLINGTON,

who paid the penalty of murder to-day, was born, according to his own statement, in Weekly county, Tenn., in December, 1864, just as the great civil war was drawing to a close. Little is known of his career until he approached the years of manhood, and then it seems that the traits of character which finally landed him on the scaffold of death, began to display and assert themselves.

At one time he and two brothers were all confined in the Tennessee penitentiary for crime. John Oscar, the murderer, was incarcerated for robbing a store. He escaped from the Tennessee penitentiary and was never recaptured by the authorities of that state.

TRACING TURLINGTON

from Tennessee, it is found that he was later in Goconda, Ill., and in charge of petty crime.

Some nine years ago, now, he worked in the town mentioned for a man by the name of Straller, a prominent farmer. There he was given a good home, was kindly treated and gained the esteem of the family with whom he was living. True, however,

TO HIS INSTINCTS

for leaving under cover of the night, silently and mysteriously, he suddenly disappeared, and next morning, when his absence was noted and investigation made, it was found that he had taken with him several suits of clothes and some money belonging to Mr. Straller. A photograph of Turlington was sent to Mr. Straller, and it was at once identified.

The first that was heard of Turlington

IN CENTRAL MISSOURI

was on the 20th of March, 1890. At 7:30 o'clock on the morning of that day, as Conductor Richards' west-bound freight train, on the Missouri Pacific railroad, was pulling out of Otterville, Cooper county, John Turlington and West Hensley, then tramps, beating their way from Indiana to Texas, were discovered, secreted in a box car of the train. Brakeman Connor ordered them off. They refused to go and the brakeman forcibly ejected them. Upon being ejected, Turlington drew a revolver and fired two shots, killing two men and wounding two others. The two men then took to their heels across the country. Richards, with his train, came on to Sedalia, and notified the railroad authorities, and Detective DeLong, Sheriff Smith, Deputy Scally and Officer James Gossage, went eastward to intercept and capture the men. They headed them off about two miles south of Williams' crossing on the Missouri Pacific some four miles east of Sedalia, in a cornfield, and the men surrendered after a little show of resistance.

They were examined and each found to have a pistol on his person. They were

BROUGHT TO SEDALIA

and on the afternoon of the day of the shooting they were arraigned before Justice Fisher on the charge of carrying concealed weapons, that being the only charge that could be preferred against them in Pettis county. Turlington gave the name of West Hensley gave the name of Smith. They pleaded guilty and were each fined fifty dollars and costs. They

went to jail to serve this out and staid in jail here about sixty days. They were then taken to Boonville, to answer to the charge of assault with intent to kill. There, Turlington, under the name of West, was given six months in jail. Hensley was given a short jail sentence, at the end of which he returned to Sedalia, where his mother lives, leaving Turlington in the Cooper county jail.

About 7 o'clock, Saturday evening,

JUNE 14, 1890,

Thomas C. Cranmer, sheriff of Cooper county, entered the jail, accompanied by a negro. The prisoners had just finished their supper and the negro removed the dishes from the lower tier of cells and the corridor door was locked. This part of the work being accomplished the door separating the cell room and the hall was left open. The sheriff then went up to the upper tier of cells where Turlington occupied a cell. He stepped in front of the open corridor gate waiting for the return of the jail porter to come after the dishes on that tier. He placed his left foot on the floor of the cell, which is about eighteen inches higher than the platform upon which he was standing. While the sheriff was in this position, Turlington rapidly walked out of his cell, and when directly in front of the sheriff he drew a 44-Remington revolver and aiming quickly, fired point blank at the officer. The sheriff, as if to guard himself, threw up his left hand, and the bullet passed through the wrist, entered the left side of the abdomen and passed through the kidneys, the ball lodging in the back just under the shoulder blade, and Turlington, and Cranmer partially raising himself, fired two shots at the escaping prisoner both of which unfortunately missed him. The connecting door being open Turlington ran into the hall, out of a rear door, jumped over the back fence and started in a southwesterly direction towards a place known as Simpson's park. Plucky Sheriff Cranmer recovered from the shock produced by the bullet passing through his body and gaining his feet with rare presence of mind, closed and locked the door of the corridor, thereby preventing the escape of the other prisoners who had come out of their cells and were ready to seek escape. With tottering steps, his face pale as death and his clothing bathed in his heart's blood, he walked down the steps and entered the resident portion of the jail. Surgical aid was quickly summoned, but he had received his death wound, and he was past all medical aid—only to step the outward flow of blood, and the administration of opiates to relieve the internal pains. The wounded man suffered considerably throughout the night, and death came to his relief from pain at 8 o'clock Sunday morning, June 15.

Turlington, with his deadly revolver, after escaping from the jail,

REACHED THE SUBURBS

He was, however, quickly captured by City Marshal Taliaferro and a posse of citizens. Marshal Taliaferro hurried him back to jail, securely locked him up and placed a strong guard around the jail, which he kept there all that night and the next day. Excitement raged at fever heat among the people of Boonville and vicinity, and Turlington narrowly escaped lynching, which he greatly feared, by the vigilance of Marshal Taliaferro and Mayor Swap. The latter issued a proclamation commanding all good citizens to turn out and assist to preserve the place and uphold the law. It was Sheriff Cranmer's dying request that no violence be done to his murderer and this request doubtless

SAVED HIS NECK

from lynching. Shortly after Turlington had been returned to the jail Marshal Taliaferro entered the dark cell and put him under the "sweating" process. He quickly wilted and told all he knew about the shooting. Turlington stated it was a pre-arranged plan of the prisoners to break jail and that he shot the sheriff for the sole purpose of effecting his escape and to aid the others in gaining their liberty. He said the loaded revolver with which he did the shooting was handed to him through the bars of the outer wall window by West Hensley, his former jail mate in the Pettis county jail. Hensley had agreed to meet him in the vicinity of Otterville water-tank. They agreed upon signals—such as whistles and shooting—if it happened to be dark when he reached the neighborhood. He said that his right name was not West but J. O. Turlington, and that his mother, Mrs. Anna T. Turlington, resided in Dresden Tennessee. He requested the marshal to telegraph to his mother informing her of the strait in which he was placed. Marshal Taliaferro, after hearing Turlington's confession, determined upon the capture of Hensley, the accessory to the killing, and in company with a deputy sheriff, proceeded to Tipton and from there to the Otterville tank. About daylight Monday morning they succeeded in arresting Hensley and a tramp and handcuffed them together. Later, finding the tramp was an innocent party, he was released and Hensley was brought to Sedalia. Upon arriving at Sedalia the marshal was intercepted by a telegram ordering him not to bring Hensley to Boonville or he would certainly be mobbed. Hensley was then locked up in the Pettis county jail.

Hensley was kept in jail here for some time, for safety, when he was taken to Boonville. Last fall, he was arraigned in the Cooper county circuit court on the charge of being accessory to the murder of Sheriff Cranmer. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to twenty years in the penitentiary, where he is now serving his term.

In July, following the murder, Turlington was indicted by the Cooper county grand jury for murder in the first degree. He was put on trial at the same term of court. Judge W. S. Shirk, of Sedalia, was appointed by the court and consented to defend him. He conducted an able and a vigorous defense, but the jury quickly brought in a verdict of guilty. Turlington was first sentenced to hang September 11, 1890, but his every effort to secure a new trial, though unsuccessful. This prevented the execution on the day originally set. The case came up

BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT in January, last. The verdict of the lower court was confirmed and the day of execution set for Friday, March 6, 1891.

Turlington made two escapes from the Cooper county county jail, while under sentence of death and awaiting a decision from the supreme court. The first escape was on Saturday night, Nov. 2, 1890. He escaped by making a dummy of his bedclothes and placing it in his cell, after dark, by a dimly lighted lamp to deceive his guard, and secreting himself in a dark corridor. He later on, the same night, took the jail key from under the bed of the jailer, while he unsuspectingly slept soundly and unlocked the door and walked out. His escape was not discovered until the next morning. Poses scoured the country but to no purpose. Turlington made his way out

of the country by traveling at night and reached Union county, Kentucky, the scene of his old haunts, where he was acquainted. His identity was there discovered and he was arrested and returned to Boonville and

REINCARCERATED, after being out two weeks. Again, on the night of Dec. 20, last, Saturday night, again, he escaped through the roof of the jail, by sawing out, and stole a horse from Sheriff Albert Hornbeck, who had been elected sheriff of Cooper county, in November, preceding. He fled on the stolen horse, not knowing in what direction he was going. By some strange fatality, the following morning found him in the vicinity of Otterville, the scene of his shooting at a brakeman, for which he was first arrested in this state, and the home of his victim, sheriff Cranmer. That night he was discovered in a corn shock and captured. He was

RETURNED TO JAIL and remained there, chained to the floor, with two day guards and two night guards constantly over him until his execution.

Judge Shirk made several attempts to obtain a stay of execution for him from the governor but without success. A few days before his death, Turlington professed religion and was baptized by Rev. L. P. Norfleet, a Methodist minister of Boonville. His aged mother still lives in Tennessee.

Last July, while imprisoned, Turlington sent for Sheriff Smith, of this county, and confessed to him that he and a man named Temple robbed the express car on the north bound M. K. & T. passenger train at Pryor Creek, I. T., in the fall of 1889, and secured a large amount of booty. On his confession, Temple was arrested, tried and convicted and is now serving a penitentiary term. Sheriff Smith, of this county, received the reward for the apprehension of the guilty parties in this robbery, \$1,000.

THOMAS C. CRANMER, the victim of Turlington's revolver, was born near Clifton City, Cooper county, Mo., Feb. 10, 1836. When a young man he made a name for war he was a body guard of General Price of the Confederate army. On March 1, 1860, he was married to Lucy W. Taylor. Six children were born to them four of whom, three girls and a boy, are orphaned. Sheriff Cranmer served a term in the legislature in '63. He was elected sheriff of Cooper county in 1888, and was nominated for a second term when he was killed.

NOTES.

—Kansas City and St. Louis papers had special representatives at the execution.

—Sheriff Hornbeck sent his family out to their old home, Prairie Home, yesterday.

—Great sympathy was manifested for Turlington by many of the ladies of Boonville.

Undertaker W. L. Spahr prepared a plain but neat coffin yesterday and had it in readiness at the jail yard this morning.

—Last evening, Turlington remarked that he didn't care what became of his body, for the Lord would take care of his soul.

CHILD. "Gran'ma, kiss me good-night. Sister is asleep, but we so love to hear you tell of all the ladies that call you Mother."

MRS. PINKHAM. "Yes, darling, when you are older perhaps you may do as I have done."

CHILD. "Everybody loves you, gran'ma; I wish everybody would love me."

MRS. PINKHAM. "Everyone will love you, my child, if they can confide in you."

The above dialogue tells its own story; even the little child, without knowing why her grandmother is so universally loved, sees in her face a light of intellectual sympathy that satisfies her. That sympathy has extended itself all over the world, for wherever civilized women exist, Mrs. Pinkham is known and revered.

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